

Broadcasting

By Peter David Smith

The original meaning of the word “broadcasting” is about sowing seeds by casting those seeds upon as broad an area of land as possible. The alternatives to broadcasting are narrowcasting (often in ploughed furrows) or the planting of individual seeds in small chosen areas. Dibbling.

I have very few illusions about my writing skill. Realistically, I'm a person who *can* write and I believe I'm getting better at it. Good.

In fact, I **KNOW** I'm getting better at it. Nevertheless, I still have a lot to learn.

The ideas are the important thing.

Of course, I would be annoyed if anyone were to plagiarise my actual words but it would be perfectly fine for anyone to take up similar *ideas* and run with them. I would be happy for the ideas to have a life of their own and go on into the world, cropping up in other people's work. That's actually a very good result.

So. Ideas as seeds.

When I have a good idea I want to plant that idea in as many places as possible. If someone were to think that all of my writing was total rubbish but if they nevertheless liked one of my ideas and they nurtured it, that would be good, that would be great, that would be wonderful.

The, perhaps slightly more negative, way of looking at it is William S. Burroughs' use of the term “Language Virus”. Ideas can be positive or negative and both of these can spread like a virus. If you can write at all then you are spreading ideas and those ideas can grow into good or bad language concepts.

When we were younger my sister used to go lots of horror movies. She would come home from the cinema talking about all of the horrible things she had witnessed on the movie screen. Vampires, ghosts, demons, kids with their heads spinning around.

In those days, in my youth, when I was almost monastic in the customised Christian-Buddhist-Taoist-Hindu-Sikh-Pagan New Age spiritual way of the thinking that I had embraced, I always refused to go to horror films or to read horror books.

My belief back in those days was that anyone who mentally dwells on horrible things all the time is doing themselves psychological damage and will become increasingly morbid and scared of shadows.

I'm not saying that I was actually wrong to think that. I'm only saying that I've mellowed out a bit in my maturity and I'm now pretty easygoing about horror. These days I tend to think that the important thing is that the horror film you watch should have some interesting and good idea to it instead of just morbid gloom or bloody slashers.

I watched the comedy “Ghost Busters” in the 1980s. I liked that a lot. My only criticism of it was that the four characters who were actively ghost busting comprised three white guys with university qualifications and then one unemployed black guy belatedly added on to the roster. I didn't like that because they were perpetuating racial and cultural stereotypes. I would have preferred a racially diverse group rather than a tokenistic one. Years later I had the exact same criticism of the 1990s TV series “Sliders”.

Hollywood and TV were sowing the seeds of bad ideas. Stereotyped ideas. TV shows with only one or two black actors were getting praised as if they had really broken the colour bar. I suppose they had, but only in a very little way.

I've always been a book reader and a tough critic of what happens when a movie version is made. I hate the way classics are treated. I mean, what actually is the bloomin' point of saying a movie is a "great Charles Dickens classic" if the screenwriters have thrown out most of Charles Dickens' words, thrown out the narrative descriptions of scenes, changed the dialogue to modernised words and phrasing and reduced the entire thing to a truncated plot structure?

I've always read a lot of science fiction and, while SF is a completely different genre from horror, some productions blur the lines between "alien life forms" and "monsters". Amongst book readers, that is to say science fiction readers, the "B.E.M.s" or "Bug Eyed Monsters" used to be a joke until the movie industry got hold of it.

Movies and television have a much larger audience than literature and that causes the language virus of movie ideas to spread to more people while the more carefully thought out ideas of the books can only reach the more thoughtful audience. So you get a two-tier system in which the better ideas from the books are crushed by the worse ideas from the movies. Broadcasting versus ploughing a furrow.

Of course movies aren't always bad. It's simply that they try to appeal to the lowest common denominators of basic emotions which can be understood by the broadest range of people. I loved Arthur C. Clark's "2001: A Space Odyssey". It was good because Arthur C. Clark wrote the novel and the screenplay at the same time. However, the cinema audience, used to the simpler concepts of horror and action movies, found it difficult to understand.

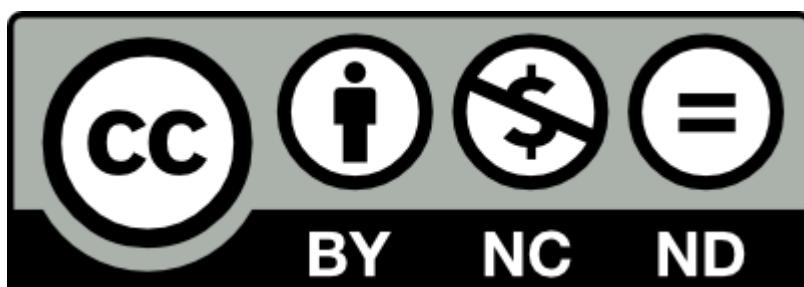
I suppose comedy horror was an acceptable way for me to appreciate some horror themes without getting into the morbidity.

On TV self-mocking stories like "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Angel" are good because they get people into that self-mocking style of thought which takes everything with an ironic twist of wisdom. They generate a mindset in which can enjoy absurdity without getting bogged down in it. They bring the quality of knowingness to the broader public.

I'm delighted to see that genuine surrealism such as "Severance" is now popular and is taking over from the stupider horror forms. Things might be getting better.

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